

# FIRST THINGS FIRST

## MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

### FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, REGINA

#### February 2020

#### MINISTER'S MESSAGE

My busy year as Moderator continues. I am so grateful for the patience and flexibility shown by the leadership and people of First Church. You are putting up with all my comings and goings and allowing me space to do things a little differently when needed. Our plans for the beginning of the Season of Lent this year are a perfect example.

For the last two years we have started Lenten Season with an Ash Wednesday Service on the Wednesday before the first Sunday in Lent. This year, Ash Wednesday falls on February 26<sup>th</sup>, and the first Sunday in Lent is March 1st. However, without realising the significance of the date, I planned a Moderator trip to Ontario for that week where I will be leading a workshop on ecumenism at the Crieff Hills Retreat Centre on the Thursday morning and, as a result, I will need to be on a plane on Ash Wednesday.

In light of this, I suggested to Session that perhaps we could observe Ash Wednesday a little earlier – on Sunday, February 23<sup>rd</sup> – and Session agreed. Session also agreed it would be appropriate this year to mark the final “celebration” prior to Lent – namely “Pancake Tuesday” or “Mardi Gras” – several days ahead of “Ash Wednesday,” passing a motion to hold a Pancake Breakfast on Sunday morning, February 23, before our worship service. The Pancake Breakfast will be held from 9 – 10 am that day. I think it’s going to be both a fun and a meaningful Sunday morning at First Church!

If you have never attended an Ash Wednesday Service then a good opportunity to experience it will be on Sunday morning, February 23. I hope you will find it to be a helpful way to move into a season of prayer, repentance, and preparation for Easter. Here is a brief introduction:

#### The Meaning of Lent

Easter, the high point of the Christian year, is a time of joyous celebration. Lent, the season of

40 days leading up to Easter, is more sombre. It is a time for reflection and learning, a season of soul-searching and repentance.

Lent originated in the very earliest days of the Church as a preparatory time for Easter, a time when the faithful rededicated themselves and when converts were instructed in the faith and prepared for baptism. By observing the forty days of Lent, the individual Christian imitates Jesus' withdrawal into the wilderness for forty days. Lent has been observed in the Church since apostolic times.

The word “Lent” come from “lencten,” an old Anglo-Saxon word meaning “spring,” a time when the days “lengthen”. It consists of 40 days including the six Sundays before Easter (though while Sundays are “in” Lent they are not “of” Lent, as Sunday is always the day of resurrection). The liturgical colour for Lent is purple, signifying humility and penitence.

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday. The term “Lent” derives from a tradition in many Christian churches to use ashes to make the sign of a cross on the forehead of a Christian to symbolize repentance and grieving.

It is preceded by Shrove Tuesday when Christians have traditionally prepared pancakes. This is an old tradition in which Christians gave up meat for Lent and used the last of the animal fat to make pancakes. (“Shrove” means to hear confession of sins and pronounce forgiveness.) You may also know Shrove Tuesday by the name Fat Tuesday, Mardi Gras, or Carnival (Latin for “farewell to meat”). In many countries this day has become a last fling before the solemnity of Lent.

Rev. Amanda Currie

## **MISSION & OUTREACH COMMITTEE**

### **PWS&D APPEAL - Feb 2-16**

Your donations to PWS&D will go to the Shining Hospital Leprosy Program in rural Nepal. Leprosy is still active in Nepal and especially among the poor in remote areas. If not diagnosed and treated, the disease can cause permanent disability along with loss of employment. Many with leprosy are shunned as there are so many misunderstandings about what causes the disease. The Shining Hospital provides specialized diagnosis, medical treatment, and education to patients and communities.

Please support PWS&D during our special appeal.

Mary Jesse  
Mission & Outreach Committee



## **FELLOWSHIP COMMITTEE**

“Souper” Sunday was indeed super! A fantastic selection of soup, scrumptious desserts, and generous contributions to the Shining Hospital in Nepal, which provides medical care to those with leprosy, and education about its causes and treatment.



The Mission and Outreach and Fellowship Committees thank everyone for their support of this project.

Sheila Wilson  
Fellowship Committee



## 95<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

Sunday, January 12, 2020 was a wonderful day of celebration at First Church. We started the day with a very meaningful worship service. The Rev. Dr. Jean Morris was our guest preacher.



Immediately after the service a congregational photograph was taken which turned out very well. (copies are still available if you didn't get one).



This was followed by a delicious catered dinner which was enjoyed by all.



After the dinner Heather Mazurak shared a very interesting and informative presentation on the history of First Church. We also had musical numbers by both our Senior Choir and the Children's Choir. Members of the congregation, both children and adults, shared what they love about First Church, and what their hope is for the future.



A presentation was made to Bill Kelly who has been a member of First Church since 1949! Wow!



It was a wonderful celebration of sharing – of listening to the past and looking forward to the future, including the 100th anniversary.

Sheila Wilson  
Fellowship Committee Convener

### **I Just Heard Some Good News**

(Revised words the Choir sang at our lunch.)

Refrain:

I just heard some good news,  
some good news, some good news.  
I just heard some good news,  
the church is ninety-five!

They said it was a union,  
way back in twenty-five.  
But some of us were stubborn  
and kept our church alive.

Refrain

First Church is what we called it,  
for we were very proud.  
Our ministry kept going,  
we shared God's Word aloud.

Refrain

Throughout all of our history,  
the Spirit's been our guide.  
Christ calls us still to reach out wide.  
And we worship God, and we love and care,  
And we reach, and we dare,  
and we follow Jesus.

I just heard some good news,  
some good news, some good news.  
I just heard some good news,  
the church will thrive!

### **LENTEN BOOK STUDY**

#### **Presbyterians Journeying Through Lent Together**

In Lent 2020, Presbyterians across the country are invited to join a denomination-wide book study on N.T. Wright's *Lent for Everyone, Matthew, Year A*. Using thoughtfully prepared weekly study guides, Presbyterians will journey through Lent reflecting on what it means to be kingdom-people who participate in the new life that Jesus has brought.

Jesus' proclamation throughout his ministry that "the Kingdom of Heaven is Near" has often been mistakenly interpreted as Jesus coming to "tell people how to get to heaven." In truth, what Jesus was demonstrating through his presence and his teaching was that "heaven has come near to us," or, as N.T. Wright explains, "the God of heaven and earth was coming to earth to establish his sovereign saving rule." (147) Wright invites readers to explore this truth through Matthew's telling of the Gospel story.

Through close readings of the lectionary texts for each day during Lent, Wright draws us into the biblical scenes as they unfolded, revealing more and more about what it means that Jesus is King and Lord, not just 'in heaven' but on earth as well.

In this study, we will follow the pattern Wright establishes in his daily devotions of focusing both on how Jesus' first followers would have heard this message, and what it means for those of us who are hearing the message more than 2000 years later. We will look closely at the events of Jesus' life from birth to death and resurrection, not just as a faithful account of what happened in the past but, as Wright explains, as a "clue for how we should be living as followers of the risen Christ today." (151)

#### **How to Take Part**

We will be ordering about 15 copies of the book so that those who wish may participate in this Lenten Study. You are welcome to make a donation to the church to cover the cost of your book (about \$15). You may read and reflect independently, join in the online Facebook discussion group with Presbyterians from across the country, and/or attend three discussion evenings at First Church on Tuesdays, March 17, March 31, and April 7 at 7:30 pm in the Morris Room.

Please let the Rev. Amanda Currie know if you would like to participate.

### **PRESBYTERIANS SHARING**

Every year Presbyterians across Canada generously and faithfully support the mission and ministry of The Presbyterian Church in Canada through their gifts to Presbyterians Sharing. The Presbyterian Church in Canada is grateful for the \$8,389,514 which came from congregations,

individuals, Women's Missionary Society, Atlantic Mission Society, foundations and others in 2019. These gifts are equipping congregations, beginning new faith communities, supporting international partners, empowering youth, encouraging new ministers and theological students, supporting Indigenous ministries, speaking on issues of justice – and so much more!

Thank you! Your generosity is inspiring. Please take a moment to watch this short video: <https://presbyterian.ca/2020/01/23/thank-you-for-your-generosity/?bblinkid=200886166&bbemailid=17419328&bejrid=1350888255>.

### **FUNDSCRIP**

The next order Sunday will be Feb. 16. Specials for February included la Vie en Rose 11% and Lowe's 4%. Gas and grocery cards are available for purchase. Visit the FundScrip table in the gym after worship to place an order or purchase cards. If you buy a \$50 card, it costs you \$50 and the church gets 2 or 3% back. It costs you nothing extra. Thanks for your support!

### **LETTER FROM KENORA FELLOWSHIP CENTRE**

Boozhoo, greeting from the traditional Territory of Treaty 3, land of the Anishinaabe Nation, where the Kenora Fellowship Centre is situated.

Greetings from the people we serve, our hard-working staff, and our Board of Directors. Merry Christmas and all the best of happiness, health, and prosperity in 2020. We pray for peace, hope, joy, and love for all.

Please excuse this late Christmas message and hope it finds you very well.

We have been responding to filling community gaps in service for people facing homelessness and poverty. We have continued to serve as a place of safe refuge to those in need. We have been home to many over the decades. It is a very busy time in this holiday season. However, busy for very different reasons apart from the commercial side of the celebrations. We have

experienced much loss throughout this year and weekly lately. It compounds greatly with those who have suffered previous losses, including the historical traumas of family disconnect.

Our Advent season focused on providing a safe and healing atmosphere with encouraging and engaging messages and prayer times. We worked hard to provide many healing and wellness activities and strengthen the "home" we offer. It allowed us to also engage with many other people, families, churches, and organizations who also offered compassion and caring through wonderful acts of giving and sharing.

As we know your congregation has had a heart for our Ministry, we express our thanks and deep appreciation to all of you. Thank you for every act of kindness, including thoughts and prayers that you have extended to us to support our work.

We hope and pray for God's blessings be abundant for all of you and your Ministry.

*"He has told you. O Mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God."* Micah 6:8

Miigwech, thank you! Happy New Year from all of us at the Kenora Fellowship Centre.

Yvonne Bearbull

### **A BRIEF THEOLOGY OF VALENTINE'S DAY**

Before Hallmark, before long-stemmed roses delivered to your door or your desk, before heart-shaped boxes of chocolates with embossed "flavor maps" - there was St. Valentine. Actually, there may have been two. The history's pretty murky, and includes legends about an early Christian priest (or was it a bishop?) martyred for (perhaps?) surreptitiously helping Christians to wed. So uncertain are the details, in fact, that in 1969 the Roman Catholic Church officially discontinued liturgical veneration of St. Valentine, though he's still on the list of recognized saints.

But the holiday lives on. It turns out Chaucer, of all people, may be the reason why: the late-medieval poet penned "Parliament of Foules" sometime around 1375, including a link -



embellished by more than a little poetic license - between courtly love and St. Valentine's feast day. February 14, Chaucer wrote, is the day birds come together to find a mate: "*For this was sent on Seynt Valentyne's day / Whan every foul cometh ther to choose his mate.*" A lovely day indeed - and as the poem's fame spread, so did the day's association with affection, both avian and human.

But however fanciful these various legends may be, there's a deeper wisdom beneath the whimsy. For centuries in Christian thought, the most prestigious book in the Bible, the "graduate school" of Christian spirituality, wasn't Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John, or the Book of Genesis, or the Psalms. It was the Song of Songs, an ancient - and pretty racy! - romantic poem about love in a world fraught with danger. Over the centuries, the poem was interpreted as an unsurpassed figurative portrait of the love between God and God's people.

Not that God's love for us is sexual; rather, the idea is that the intensity, intimacy, and delight of sexual love can be a kind of window, a sacramental parable, for understanding God's love. Divine love is tender and kind, immersive and ecstatic, full of longing and delight. It's vulnerable, beautiful, gentle, and strong.

No doubt St. Valentine would approve :)

So, this Valentine's Day, think of all the love in your life - the love you feel and the love you witness; even the love among the birds of the air! - as a glimpse of God's care for all creation. And if you're especially perceptive (or especially mischievous), you can glimpse divine love even in places as ordinary as a sweet little greeting card, an arrangement of flowers, or a "flavor map" embossed on a heart-shaped lid.

If we have eyes to see and ears to hear, the truth about God's love is that it's all around us, the Song of all songs, the Symphony of all symphonies, echoing everywhere.

Happy Valentine's Day!

From the saltproject.org



## FEBRUARY EVENTS

<b>Feb 9</b>	<b>10:30 am</b>	<b>Worship &amp; Sunday School</b>
Feb 11	9:00 am	Adult Walk
	10:30 am	Bible Study
	noon	Freedom 55'ers
Feb 13	10:00 am	Adult Walk
	7:00 pm	Choir
	8:15 pm	Chancel singers
<b>Feb 16</b>	<b>10:30 am</b>	<b>Worship &amp; Sunday School</b>
		<i>Donna Wilkinson preaching</i>
Feb 18	9:00 am	Adult Walk
	10:30 am	Bible Study
	noon	Freedom 55'ers
Feb. 19	7:00 pm	Board of Managers
Feb 20	10:00 am	Adult Walk
	7:00 pm	Choir
	8:15 pm	Chancel singers
Feb. 22	2:00 pm	Funeral for Elizabeth Kitson
<b>Feb 23</b>	<b>9-10 am</b>	<b>Pancake Breakfast</b>
	<b>10:30 am</b>	<b>Ash Wednesday Worship</b>
		<b>Sunday School</b>
Feb 25	9:00 am	Adult Walk
	10:30 am	Bible Study
	noon	Freedom 55'ers
Feb 27	10:00 am	Adult Walk
	7:00 pm	Choir

## MARCH EVENTS

**Mar. 1 10:30 am Worship &  
Sunday School  
Holy Communion**

*Rev. Bob Wilson preaching*

Mar. 3 9:00 am Adult Walk  
10:30 am Bible Study  
noon Freedom 55'ers

Mar. 5 10:00 am Adult Walk  
7:00 pm Choir  
8:15 pm Chancel singers

**Mar. 8 10:30 am Worship &  
Sunday School**

*Rev. Bob Wilson preaching*

Mar. 10 9:00 am Adult Walk  
10:30 am Bible Study  
noon Freedom 55'ers  
7:00 pm Session/Board meeting

Mar. 11 7:00 pm Book Club @  
Heather Mazurak's home

Mar. 12 10:00 am Adult Walk  
7:00 pm Choir  
8:15 pm Contemporary Group

Mar. 13 2:30 pm Prayer Shawl Gathering

Mar. 14 9:00 am Presbytery meeting at  
First Church

**Mar 15 10:30 am Worship &  
Sunday School**

Mar. 17 9:00 am Adult Walk  
10:30 am Bible Study  
noon Freedom 55'ers  
7:30 pm Lenten Book Study

Mar. 18 7:00 pm Board of Managers

Mar.19 10:00 am Adult Walk  
7:00 pm Choir  
8:15 pm Chancel singers

**Mar. 22 10:30 am Worship &  
Sunday School**

*Rev. Charles Kooger preaching*

Mar. 24 9:00 am Adult Walk  
10:30 am Bible Study  
noon Freedom 55'ers

Mar. 26 10:00 am Adult Walk  
7:00 pm Choir  
8:15 pm Contemporary Group

**Mar 29 10:30 am Worship &  
Sunday School**

Mar. 31 9:00 am Adult Walk  
10:30 am Bible Study  
noon Freedom 55'ers  
7:30 pm Lenten Book Study

**April 1 7:00 pm Session**